America's Clean Chit to Pak in Akshardham Temple Attack

†948. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that America has described the incident of Akshardham as heinous;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that America which is known for its quick shifts in stand, has given a clean chit to Pakistan and has refuted the charges of involvement of Pakistan in the terrorist attack on Akshardham Temple;

(c) whether it is due to the double policy of America; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) In official statements issued on 24th September 2002, the US State Department and the White House condemned the terrorist attack on Akshardham. The State Department spokesman said that the US was "shocked by this horrific attack", and the White House spokesman said it was "a particularly deadly attack and the President condemns it."

(b) No. U.S. government spokesmen have not commented on the identity of the attackers.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Richard Armitage's Statement Regarding Indo-Pak Tension

949. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, during his recent visit to India and Pakistan, observed that there was a decline in Indo-Pak tension, when at least 10 civilians were killed and over 19 children were injured in terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, the same day and terrorist killings had increased; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) In public comments made after his visit to India on 23-24 August 2002, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage stated that the situation was better than it was in May 2002, but that incidents of violence were on the upswing and the incursions across line of control had increased from the end of June though were still below the seasonal annual highs.

(b) Government has noted that U.S. officials have, on a number of occasions, recognised that cross-border infiltration from Pakistan is continuing. Government's decisions are based on its own assessment of the situation on the ground. It is Government's position that a complete cessation of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan is essential for easing tensions between India and Pakistan.

Impact of American Pressure on Pakistani Terrorist Activities

950. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether, in a recent public statement, the Prime Minister is reported to have said that the American pressure on Pakistan to control and stop terrorist activities against India was not working any more;

(b) if so, the context in which it was made;

(c) whether the same view-point was officially conveyed to President Bush during the Prime Minister's visit to the States in mid-September;

(d) if so, U.S. Government's reaction thereto and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) what alternative policy Government propose to pursue to eliminate the cross-border terrorism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes. The Prime Minister's observations were made in the context of clear evidence that cross-border infiltration and terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir continue to take place despite the commitments made by President Musharraf to the international community, including theUnited States, on ending cross-border infiltration and terrorism in India.